

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A system for scheduling a conference between callers, comprising:
a database operable to store scheduling information indicating at least a start time,
a duration, and a maximum number of callers for one or more scheduled conferences, the
scheduling information reflecting available conferencing resources;
5 a server complex coupled to the database and operable to:
communicate, to a requesting Internet Protocol (IP) user, at least one page
comprising one or more scheduling input fields;
receive scheduling input from the requesting IP user for a requested
10 conference according to the scheduling input fields;
access the database to determine, according to the scheduling input,
whether sufficient conferencing resources are available for the requested conference;
if sufficient conferencing resources are available, allocate at least some
available conferencing resources to the requested conference; and
15 in response to determining sufficient resources are available, generate
confirmations of the requested conference for communication to the callers.
2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the scheduling input indicates at least a
start time, a duration, and a maximum number of callers for the requested conference.
- 20 3. The system of Claim 2, wherein the scheduling input further comprises
a caller identifier for one or more callers.
4. The system of Claim 1, wherein the scheduling information specifies a
25 type of confirmation each caller is to receive.
5. The system of Claim 1, wherein:
the confirmation for a public switched telephone network (PSTN) caller provides
a conference telephone number; and
30 the confirmation for an Internet Protocol (IP) caller provides an IP address.

A 6. The system of Claim 1, wherein the confirmation provides a conference telephone number and a conference Internet Protocol address.

5 7. The system of Claim 1, wherein the confirmation provides conference entry information selected from the group consisting of:

a conference identifier; and

a conference password.

10 8. The system of Claim 7, wherein the confirmation further provides a caller identifier for the particular caller receiving the confirmation.

9. The system of Claim 1, wherein the confirmation provides instructions for joining the conference to each caller, each caller being selected from the group consisting of:

15 a public switched telephone network (PSTN) caller; and

an Internet Protocol (IP) caller.

10. The system of Claim 1, wherein the server complex is further operable, if sufficient conferencing resources are not available, to:

20 generate alternative scheduling information for the requested conference; and

communicate the alternative scheduling information to the requesting IP user for acceptance.

25 11. The system of Claim 1, wherein the server complex comprises at least a web server.

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12. A method of scheduling a conference between callers, comprising:
storing in a database scheduling information indicating at least a start time, a duration, and a maximum number of callers for one or more scheduled conferences, the scheduling information reflecting available conferencing resources;
communicating at least one page from a server complex to a requesting Internet Protocol (IP) user, the page comprising one or more scheduling input fields;
receiving scheduling input from the requesting IP user for a requested conference according to the scheduling input fields;
accessing the database using the server complex to determine, according to the scheduling input, whether sufficient conferencing resources are available for the requested conference;
if sufficient conferencing resources are available, using the server complex to allocate at least some available conferencing resources to the requested conference; and
in response, generating a confirmation at the server complex for communication to the callers.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein the scheduling input indicates at least a start time, a duration, and a maximum number of callers for the requested conference.

14. The method of Claim 13, wherein the scheduling input further comprises a caller identifier for one or more callers.

15. The method of Claim 12, wherein the scheduling information specifies a type of confirmation each caller is to receive.

16. The method of Claim 12, wherein:
the confirmation for a public switched telephone network (PSTN) caller provides a conference telephone number; and
the confirmation for an Internet Protocol (IP) caller provides an IP address.

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17. The method of Claim 12, wherein the confirmation provides a conference telephone number and a conference Internet Protocol address.

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18. The method of Claim 12, wherein the confirmation provides conference entry information selected from the group consisting of:

a conference identifier; and

a conference password.

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19. The method of Claim 18, wherein the confirmation further provides a caller identifier for the particular caller receiving the confirmation.

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20. The method of Claim 12, wherein the confirmation provides instructions for joining the conference to each caller, each caller selected from the group consisting of:

a public switched telephone network (PSTN) caller; and

an Internet Protocol (IP) caller.

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21. The method of Claim 12, further comprising, if sufficient conferencing resources are not available, using the server complex to:

generate alternative scheduling information for the requested conference; and

communicate the alternative scheduling information to the requesting IP user for acceptance.

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22. The method of Claim 12, wherein the server complex comprises at least a web server.

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23. Software associated with an Internet Protocol (IP) user, comprising:
conference scheduling software operable to:

provide at least one page to the IP user comprising one or more scheduling
input fields for a requested conference involving at least one public switched telephone
network (PSTN) caller and at least one IP caller;

receive scheduling input from the IP user for the requested conference,
according to the scheduling input fields, for communication to a server complex
associated with the conference bridge; and

control software for controlling selected aspects of a conference in progress, the
conference involving at least one public switched telephone network (PSTN) caller and
at least one IP caller, the control software operable to:

in response to the IP user being provided with current state information
for the conference, receive control input from the IP user for communication to a
conference bridge in which the conference is implemented.

24. The software of Claim 23, wherein the scheduling indicates at least a start
time, duration, and maximum number of callers for the requested conference.

25. The software of Claim 24, wherein the scheduling input further comprises
a caller identifier for one or more callers.

26. The software of Claim 24, wherein the scheduling information specifies
a type of confirmation each caller is to receive.

27. The software of Claim 23, wherein the conference control input specifies
an outcome selected from the group consisting of:

muting of one or more callers;

unmuting of one or more callers;

signaling of one or more callers;

communicating a recorded message to one or more callers;

involving one or more callers in a sub-conference;

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adding one or more new callers; and
removing one or more callers.

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28. The software of Claim 27, wherein the outcomes available to the IP user are determined according to a privilege level associated with the IP user.

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29. The software of Claim 23, further comprising monitoring software operable to:

provide at least one page to the IP user comprising one or more monitoring input fields;

receive conference monitoring input from the IP user according to the monitoring input fields, the monitoring input comprising a conference identifier for a conference to be monitored; and

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communicate the conference monitoring input to the conference bridge.

A 30. A method implemented in computer software associated with an Internet Protocol (IP) user, comprising:

5 providing at least one page to the IP user using conference scheduling software, the page comprising scheduling one or more scheduling input fields for a requested conference involving at least one public switched telephone network (PSTN) caller and at least one IP caller;

receiving scheduling input from the IP user for the requested conference, according to the scheduling input fields, for communication to a server complex associated with a conference bridge; and

10 in response to the IP user being provided with current state information for a conference in progress involving at least one public switched telephone network (PSTN) caller and at least one IP caller, receiving conference control input from the IP user using control software for communication to the conference bridge, the conference control input for controlling selected aspects of the conference.

15 31. The method of Claim 30, wherein the scheduling indicates at least a start time, duration, and maximum number of callers for the requested conference.

20 32. The method of Claim 31, wherein the scheduling input further comprises a caller identifier for one or more callers.

33. The method of Claim 31, wherein the scheduling information specifies a type of confirmation each caller is to receive.

25 34. The method of Claim 30, wherein the conference control input specifies an outcome selected from the group consisting of:

- muting of one or more callers;
- unmuting of one or more callers;
- signaling of one or more callers;
- 30 communicating a recorded message to one or more callers;
- involving one or more callers in a sub-conference;

adding one or more new callers; and
removing one or more callers.

35. The method of Claim 34, wherein the outcomes available to the IP user are determined according to a privilege level associated with the IP user.

36. The method of Claim 30, further comprising:
providing at least one page to the IP user using monitoring software, the page comprising monitoring input fields; and

receiving monitoring input from the IP user, using the monitoring software and according to the monitoring input fields, for communication to the conference bridge, the monitoring input comprising a conference identifier for a conference to be monitored.

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37. A system for conferencing callers, comprising:
a database operable to store current state information for one or more conferences,
at least one of the conferences involving at least one public switched telephone network
(PSTN) caller and at least one Internet Protocol (IP) caller;
5 a conference bridge node coupled to the database and operable to:
generate conference traffic for communication to the callers;
generate current state information for each conference for communication
to IP users associated with the conferences; and
in addition, periodically communicate current state information for each
10 conference to the database for storage; and
a server complex coupled to the database and to the conference bridge node, the
server complex operable to:
periodically access the stored current state information for at least one
conference associated with an IP user; and
15 communicate at least some of that stored current state information to the
IP user.

38. The system of Claim 37, wherein the current state information comprises
a caller identifier for each caller currently involved in the conference.

39. The system of Claim 37, wherein the current state information comprises
an indication of which one or more callers are currently speaking.

40. The system of Claim 37, wherein the conference bridge node is operable
to generate the current state information for communication to IP users in substantially
real time.

41. The system of Claim 37, wherein the server complex is further operable
to:
30 receive conference control input from an IP user according to the current state
information; and

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communicate one or more instructions to the conference bridge node according to the conference control input.

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42. The system of Claim 41, wherein the conference control input specifies an outcome selected from the group consisting of:

muting of one or more callers;
unmuting of one or more callers;
signaling of one or more callers;
communicating a recorded message to one or more callers;
involving one or more callers in a sub-conference;
adding one or more new callers; and
removing one or more callers.

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43. The method of Claim 42, wherein the outcomes available to the IP user are determined according to a privilege level associated with the IP user.

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44. The system of Claim 37, wherein the conference bridge node is further operable to add a new caller to the conference in response to the new caller either entering a conference telephone number or entering a conference IP address.

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45. The system of Claim 44, wherein the conference bridge node is further operable to generate an entry tone for communication to the callers in response to adding the new caller to the conference.

46. The system of Claim 37, wherein the server complex comprises at least a web server.

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47. A method for conferencing callers, comprising:

storing in a database current state information for one or more conferences, at least one of the conferences involving at least one public switched telephone network (PSTN) caller and at least one Internet Protocol (IP) caller;

5 generating conference traffic using a conference bridge node for communication to the callers;

generating current state information for each conference using the conference bridge node for communication to IP users associated with the conferences;

10 periodically communicating current state information for the conferences from the conference bridge node to the database for storage;

using a server complex, periodically accessing the stored current state information for at least one conference associated with an IP user; and

15 communicating at least some of that stored current state information from the server complex to the IP user.

48. The method of Claim 47, wherein the current state information comprises a caller identifier for each caller currently involved in the conference.

20 49. The method of Claim 47, wherein the current state information comprises an indication of which one or more callers are currently speaking.

50. The method of Claim 47, wherein the conference bridge node generates the current state information for communication to IP users in substantially real time.

25 51. The method of Claim 47, further comprising:

receiving conference control input from at least one IP user at the server complex according to the current state information; and

30 communicating one or more instructions to the conference bridge node from the server complex according to the conference control input.

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52. The method of Claim 51, wherein the conference control input specifies an outcome selected from the group consisting of:

- muting of one or more callers;
- unmuting of one or more callers;
- 5 signaling of one or more callers;
- communicating a recorded message to one or more callers;
- involving one or more callers in a sub-conference;
- adding one or more new callers; and
- removing one or more callers.

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53. The method of Claim 52, wherein the outcomes available to the IP user are determined according to a privilege level associated with the IP user.

54. The method of Claim 47, further comprising using the conference bridge node to add a new caller to the conference in response to the new caller either entering a conference telephone number or entering a conference IP address.

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55. The method of Claim 54, further comprising using the conference bridge node to generate an entry tone for communication to the callers in response to adding the new caller to the conference.

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56. The method of Claim 47, wherein the server complex comprises at least a web server.